

to have to make, which will have a lot to do with the fate of their own people.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:02 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House after receiving the initial report of the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security. In his remarks, he referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

## Memorandum on Assistance to Families Affected by Aviation and Other Transportation Disasters

*September 9, 1996*

*Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Transportation, the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board*

*Subject:* Assistance to Families Affected by Aviation and Other Transportation Disasters

When an aviation or other transportation disaster occurs, the Federal Government properly bears responsibility for addressing the needs of families of the passengers involved. In the event of a disaster occurring abroad, the Department of State currently performs such functions. In the event of a disaster determined to result from criminal activity, the Department of Justice aids the families of victims. No unit of the Federal Government, however, now has clear responsibility, authority, and capacity to assist families of passengers involved in domestic disasters not determined to be criminal.

To fill the gap, I am asking the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), as the unit of the Federal Government with the lead role in investigating transportation disasters, to coordinate the provision of Federal services to the families of victims. Such services might include, as appropriate in the circumstances, providing speedy and accurate information about the accident and recovery efforts, ensuring that families who wish to travel to the accident site receive all necessary assistance, and arranging opportunities for counseling and other support. I am also asking the NTSB to work cooperatively with State and local authorities and with private relief organizations, such as the American National Red Cross, to ensure appropriate coordination

of the services they provide with those of the Federal Government.

To enable the NTSB to perform these coordinating functions effectively, I am directing the heads of the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Health and Human Services, and Transportation, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to recognize the NTSB as the coordinator of services to families and to cooperate fully with the NTSB regarding the prompt and effective delivery of such services.

In particular, within 15 days of the date of this directive, the head of each listed department or agency is to designate an official who has primary responsibility for working with the NTSB to provide services to families. Within 30 days of this designation, each listed department or agency is to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the NTSB, specifying services the department or agency will provide at NTSB's request, as well as specifying any other cooperative arrangements to go into effect in the event of an aviation or other transportation disaster. The heads of the listed departments and agencies shall notify me promptly of all such memoranda.

By ensuring that a single agency has the responsibility to coordinate the provision of support services and the authority to call on other departments and agencies to provide such services, this directive will improve the capacity of the Federal Government to address the needs of the families of victims of aviation and other transportation disasters. In so doing, it may provide some small measure of comfort to families that have suffered grievous loss.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON